

Houses one month before had voted to reject.

This week, with the FAA conference report soon going to be recommitted to the conference, 16 Senators wrote to the conferees expressing grave concern over the restoration of the mandatory cost-sharing language and urging them to drop this harmful provision before the conference report is brought back to the full House and Senate. Thirty-five members of the House signed a similar bipartisan letter.

I want to pass an FAA reauthorization bill. The FAA plays an important role in assuring the safety of the traveling public. At the same time, New Mexico's 51 airports are in desperate need of the Federal funding provided under the FAA's Airport Improvement Program. I hope all Senators are aware that AIP was not extended under the first continuing resolution, and all new airport construction projects are on hold pending the reauthorization. With the serious unemployment situation the Nation faces, this is no time to shut down the jobs these vital airport construction projects produce.

I've come to the floor today to urge the conferees to work together in a bipartisan manner to produce a conference report that all Senators can support. Inserting controversial measures in conference that are opposed by both houses has left us with an FAA conference report that is essentially dead. In my opinion, imposing mandatory cost sharing for EAS communities, which a majority in both houses rejected, will only delay further the FAA reauthorization bill.

I do believe that by returning the FAA bill to conference we can begin to work in a bipartisan manner to restore integrity to the conference process that all Senators should demand. When this bill goes back to conference, I urge the FAA conferees to do the right thing for rural communities across America by preserving the Essential Air Service Program.

I ask unanimous consent to print the above-referenced letters in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, July 24, 2003.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

Hon. ERNEST HOLLINGS,
Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR GENTLEMEN: We want to thank you for your leadership in developing S. 824, "The Aviation Reinvestment and Revitalization Vision Act" (AIR-V). As you lead the Senate conferees and complete work on settling differences in the House companion, H.R. 2115, we want to express our support for the Senate position and our strong opposition to the inclusion of any Essential Air Service (EAS) mandatory cost-sharing language in the final legislative package.

As you know, EAS provides subsidized commercial air service to 125 small commu-

nities nationwide that would otherwise be cut off from the air transportation network. The Committee-reported version of S. 824 includes a number of innovative provisions to help EAS communities grow their ridership, including a marketing incentive program that would financially reward EAS towns for achieving ridership goals. At the same time, the Committee's bill proposed a pilot program requiring a 10 percent annual community cost-sharing requirement at EAS airports within 100 miles of any hub airport. In the end, the full Senate did not endorse the concept of an annual local community match, having on June 12 unanimously approved an amendment offered by Senators BINGAMAN and INHOFE to strike the EAS cost-sharing provisions in S. 824. In addition, the House passed its FAA Reauthorization bill after voting not to include cost-sharing for EAS.

While the Commerce Committee's proposed cost-sharing would have only applied to an EAS community under certain specific conditions, we remain concerned about the concept of mandatory cost-sharing. Some of these cash-strapped communities in economically depressed rural areas of our states would be unable to contribute the hundreds of thousands of dollars necessary to keep their air service. As such, we ask that the final version of the FAA Reauthorization legislation reflect the Senate's position on this issue and not include any EAS cost-sharing language.

We look forward to working with you and other members of the Senate Commerce Committee on modernizing and strengthening the EAS program. Thank you for your consideration of our views on this issue and we hope they will be considered during the upcoming conference committee.

Sincerely,

Olympia Snowe, Jeff Bingaman, E. Benjamin Nelson, Jim Bunning, Charles Schumer, Sam Brownback, Blanche L. Lincoln, James M. Jeffords, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Jim Inhofe, Patrick Leahy, Mark Pryor, Susan Collins, Chuck Hagel, Chuck Grassley, Tom Harkin.

U.S. SENATE,

Washington, DC, September 29, 2003.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
Chairman, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. ERNEST F. HOLLINGS,
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES OBERSTAR,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

GENTLEMEN: We write out of grave concern for a provision added to the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization conference report regarding the adoption of a local cost share for certain Essential Air Service communities. This addition to the conference report not only goes against the will of both the House and the Senate, but may also have a disastrous effect on many of our small rural airports. Therefore, we urge the conference committee to remove this language before bringing the report to the respective floors for a vote.

The local cost share provision was removed from S. 824 by a bipartisan amendment offered by 15 senators, which passed on a voice vote. Likewise, a similar local cost share provision was removed from H.R. 2115 by an

amendment offered by Representatives McHugh, Peterson (PA) and Shuster.

It is our understanding that negotiations are currently under way to remove language from the conference report regarding the privatization of air traffic controllers. This provides the conference committee an excellent opportunity to remove the EAS local match provision that was already stricken on both the House and Senate floors and not included in either bill brought to the conference committee.

Additionally, this provision will have untold effects on many small rural communities. It is unacceptable to force communities to pay up to \$100,000 in a local cost share, in addition to the many costs they currently incur in running a small local airport.

We respectfully request the removal of Section 408 from the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Act conference report before it is brought to the House and Senate floors for consideration, and we look forward to working with you in the future to ensure rural communities continue to receive essential air service.

Sincerely,

Jeff Bingaman, Olympia Snowe, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Patrick Leahy, Blanche L. Lincoln, Jim Jeffords, Mark Pryor, Tom Harkin, Charles Schumer, Tom Daschle, Arlen Specter, E. Benjamin Nelson, Susan M. Collins, Chuck Grassley, Mark Dayton, Chuck Hagel.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, September 24, 2003.

Hon. JOHN MCCAIN,
Chairman, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. FRITZ HOLLINGS,
Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce Science and Transportation, Dirksen Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. DON YOUNG,
Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

Hon. JAMES OBERSTAR,
Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN YOUNG, CHAIRMAN MCCAIN, RANKING MEMBER OBERSTAR, RANKING MEMBER HOLLINGS: We write out of grave concern for a provision added to the Vision 100—Century of Aviation Reauthorization Conference Report regarding the adoption of a local cost share for certain Essential Air Service communities. This addition to the conference report not only goes against the will of both the House and the Senate, but may also have a disastrous effect on many of our small rural airports. Therefore, we urge the conference committee to remove this language before bringing the report to the respective floors for a vote.

As you know, the local cost share provision was removed in H.R. 2115 by an amendment offered by Representatives McHugh, Peterson (PA) and Shuster, which passed by a voice vote. Likewise, a similar local cost share provision was removed from S. 824 by an amendment offered by Senator Bingaman.

It is our understanding that negotiations are currently under way to remove language from the conference report regarding the privatization of air traffic controllers. This provides the conference committee an excellent opportunity to remove the EAS local match provision that was already stricken on both the House and Senate floors and not included in either bill brought to the conference committee.